



September 16, 2004

The Honorable John Larson
U.S. House of Representatives
1005 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

SEP 23 2004

Dear Representative Larson:

I am writing to endorse your bill, the Nursing Facility Fire Safety Act of 2004, which would require sprinkler systems in all nursing home facilities within five years. SEIU represents more than 120,000 workers in nursing homes across the country. The majority are Certified Nurse Aids (CNAs) who not only provide hands-on care, but are also the first responders in the case of a fire or other emergency. We believe that your legislation could reduce the tragic and unnecessary toll that nursing home fires take among the residents and their caregivers.

ANDREW L. STERN
International President

ANNA BURGER
International Secretary-Treasurer

MARY KAY HENRY
Executive Vice President

GERRY HUDSON
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ELISEO MEDINA
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TOM WOODRUFF
Executive Vice President

According to the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), there are approximately 2,300 nursing homes each year that report fires large enough to affect the building. Experts have reported that automatic fire sprinklers can reduce by up to 75% the chance of death from a health care facility fire. It is time for Congress to take action.

We appreciate your continued leadership on this long-neglected issue of nursing home safety. We commend your bill for providing a funding stream, so that capital improvements do not undermine direct care for residents. We very much hope that during the legislative process, this legislation can be expanded to include smoke detectors, an improvement in the inspection process and coverage of all facilities that participate in Medicaid and Medicare.

For too long, this primarily for-profit industry has had strong incentives to limit costs even if it jeopardizes resident care. Your bill increases nursing home safety and ensures that residents get the quality care they deserve. Again, we thank you for your leadership and support your bill.

Sincerely,

Andrew L. Stern
International President

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